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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 PRETORIA 005501

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SUBJECT: ON A CLEAR DAY THEY CAN SEE 5 PERCENT-LIFE AMONG
SOUTH AFRICA'S MICRO-OPPOSITION

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Scott I. Hamilton
Reason 1.4d

1. (C) Summary: The ANC's dominance in the April national election has raised questions about the future viability of South Africa's opposition. While the Democratic Alliance and Inkatha Freedom Party-which garnered 12 and 7 percent of the vote respectively-are probably too large and well-established to either fold or consolidate in the near to medium term, questions linger about the survival of South Africa's smaller opposition parties. Currently, eight parties, which garnered between 0.25 and 2.28 percent of the vote, are represented in Parliament, and Poloffs over the past few months have been able to meet with representatives of five of them. Their insights were extremely valuable, both on their own parties and the political spectrum writ large. What Poloffs gathered was that although most small parties are nearly broke and recognize that their prospects for growth are limited, a combination of ideological zeal and personality politics will likely keep most of these parties going for the foreseeable future. End Summary.

ACDP: THE COMMITTED MORAL WATCHDOG

2. (C) Kenneth Meshoe's African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) has been in existence since 1994 and garnered 1.6 percent of the vote, and seven parliamentary seats, in the 2004 election. Bruce Harbour, the party's national chairman, told Poloff that while the ACDP's steady growth is encouraging (it garnered two seats in 1994 and six in 1999), many party leaders were disappointed in the result, as the party had campaigned far more extensively this year than it had in the past. Harbour attributed this to the party's inability to capitalize on bread and butter issues. While the party has been outspoken on such issues as corruption and age of consent laws, it has yet to enunciate clear plans on topics like housing and jobs. Furthermore, Harbour said the ACDP is stuck between a rock and a hard place on cooperation with the ANC. Relations with the ruling party are generally good-the ANC-dominated National Assembly even voted to send an ACDP member as one of South Africa's five Pan-African Parliament (PAP) representatives-and the ACDP generally supports ANC service delivery efforts. However, this cooperation prevents the party from establishing a distinct, independent identity.

3. (C) Asked about the possibility of amalgamation, Harbour said he did not see it in the cards for the ACDP. While small, the party has a national presence, is demographically diverse, and its members are extremely committed (Harbour himself draws no salary). He said that the party refused to compromise its stances on moral issues and would only consider merging with another party if it shared the same positions. Harbour said that relations with the DA were not good, as the DA tried to block the election of the ACDP candidate to the PAP in favor of one of its own. When asked about relations with the United Christian Democratic Party, which at least on paper the ACDP appears to share many values, Harbour said they were touchy, noting dryly that UCDP were not very focused on morality issues.

UCDP: A HOMELAND PARTY IN A CHRISTIAN GUISE

4. (C) The United Christian Democratic Party was formed in 1994 from the remains of old Bophuthatswana National Party. The BNP, under strongman Lucas Mangope, governed the Bophuthatswana homeland from its establishment in 1971 until 1994 and was widely known for its rampant corruption and toadiness toward the apartheid regime. After the homeland's dissolution, the party reformed under its new name, with Mangope still at its head. Although the party boycotted the 1994 poll, it contested in 1999 and won 0.78 percent of the vote and in 2004, when it garnered 0.75 percent (approximately 118,000 votes). The party has three parliamentarians-UCDP Deputy President Kgomotso Ditshetelo, Chairman Isaac Mfundisi, and Deputy Chairman Bafithile Pule-all of whom flew to Pretoria to have lunch with Emboffs in November. (Note: Mangope represents the party in the Northwest Province provincial legislature, but Emboffs learned on a visit to the provincial parliament that Mangope

has not been seen in the chambers since February. The MPs said that the party president is "indisposed," a likely synonym for "very ill." End note.)

15. (C) The MPs, who adhered to a very strict hierarchy when speaking, described the UCDP as a small provincial party that is severely short of funds. Although the party had a relatively solid base in Northwest Province (which encapsulates much of the old homeland), it had only shell structures outside the province. Hence, Ditshetelo said that the party's first order of business is to win control of Northwest Province so that the party could show that it can deliver services. However, as with the ACDP, the UCDP described a relationship with the ANC in which they work together closely on delivery issues, particularly on parliamentary committees, but have a hard time establishing themselves as distinct. Mfundisi said that since the election ANC MPs have been telling them that they need to talk about working together more closely. When asked whether he thought such overtures might be designed to swallow up the UCDP, Mfundisi readily acknowledged the possibility.

16. (C) When asked about the possibility of amalgamation, Ditshetelo said that no other party shared the UCDP's Christian, moral outlook and therefore he saw little opportunity for greater unity. Ditshetelo went on to speak of the origin of the party's name, saying that when party leaders looked at the "prosperity" and "great strides" made by Bophuthatswana during its lifespan, they decided that only Jesus Christ could have been responsible. (Comment: They may have confused Jesus with casino owner Sol Kerzner, whose Sun City resort was almost solely responsible for the homeland's limited development. End comment.) When asked about the ACDP, Ditshetelo said with disdain that the UCDP did not share the ACDP's fundamentalist, born-again approach. He claimed that only born-again Christians could rise to the top of the ACDP, while the UCDP was more broadly based.

THE FREEDOM FRONT: A ONE-ISSUE PARTY

17. (C) Formed by General Constand Viljoen in 1994, the Freedom Front has since its inception sought to be the defenders of the Afrikaans language and Afrikaner culture. Although it finished fourth in the 1994 poll, with 2.2 percent of the vote and 9 seats in Parliament, it has stagnated since, gaining just 0.80 percent in 1999 and 0.89 this year. It has six seats in Parliament. Poloff met with Jaco Mulder, the party's Gauteng leader, who said that the party is almost solely devoted to the preservation of Afrikaans language rights, particularly in schools. Mulder said that the government's commitment to multilingualism not only is hampering students' ability to learn, but also made Afrikaners feel like strangers in their own land. Hence, the party's modest goal was to convince Afrikaans-speakers that the Freedom Front was the only party that speaks for them. The problem, however, is that Afrikaners are increasingly voting for the DA because they view the DA as the only viable opposition party. Overcoming this perception is a major obstacle, although he hoped the party's defense of Afrikaans language rights in Parliament would bolster its support. Except for a few very small Afrikaner parties, Mulder saw little possibility for consolidation.

ID: HIGH HOPES FOR THE NEWEST ARRIVAL

18. (C) South Africa's newest opposition party, the Independent Democrats, was formed in 2003 by former Pan-African Congress Whip Patricia de Lille. Widely admired for her independence and outspokenness, de Lille's personal popularity helped the party garner 1.7 percent of the vote and seven seats in Parliament. Ideologically, the party can best be described as pragmatic populists, with a special emphasis on tackling unemployment, although the development of clear policies is still at an early stage. Darryl Sutcliffe, an ID staffer in the Gauteng Legislature, told Poloffs that the party's goal is to develop clear policies on the bread and butter issues and move the focus away from Patricia de Lille. Such a move is necessary if the party wants to grow into a national force, with Sutcliffe noting that the party has only nominal structures outside of Gauteng, Western Cape, and Northern Cape provinces. Sutcliffe also said it is important for the party to be seen as a constructive force and not consistently criticize the ANC. He blasted the DA for going this route, saying its consistently negative statements earned it few friends among the majority of the populace. Sutcliffe said he envisioned the ID working with other parties on select issues in the national and provincial legislatures, but that no party shared sufficiently similar outlooks to consider a closer overall relationship.

19. (C) Significant ideological players during the anti-apartheid struggle, both the Pan-African Congress and Azanian People's Organization have fallen on hard times since 1994. The PAC, which garnered just over 1 percent of the vote in 1994, garnered just 0.71 percent in 1999 and 0.73 percent (and three seats) this year. AZAPO, which did not contest the 1994 election, garnered a miniscule 0.17 percent in 1999 and 0.25 percent (and two seats) this year. The PAC since the election has been riven by intense infighting, particularly between the national executive and the youth league. Poloff was unable to meet with PAC President Motsoko Pheko to discuss party prospects, despite promises by his secretary to the contrary. (Note: Numerous interactions with

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the PAC have shown them to be highly disorganized and difficult to contact. They are the only major South African party to not maintain a website. End note.)

10. (C) Poloff was, however, able to meet with Strike Thokoane, AZAPO's Secretary of National Projects. Thokoane, who was inspired to join the Black Consciousness movement by his friend Steve Biko, said that while the party's aims are similar to that of the ANC, AZAPO was still critical of the government's handling of the economy. Despite the fact that party president Mosibudi Mangena serves as Minister for Science and Technology, the party had no plans to merge with the ANC. Similarly, while AZAPO and PAC were discussing a unity pact, there were no plans to merge. While acknowledging AZAPO's limited prospects, Thokoane said the party had always operated on a shoestring, and would continue to do so if need be.

UDM: LOOKING LIKE A SPENT FORCE

11. (C) Founded in 1997 by former Transkei homeland leader Bantu Holomisa and former National Party Cabinet Minister Roelf Meyer, the United Democratic Movement was meant to be the party that bridged racial and ethnic divides and mount a real challenge to the ANC. Today, it finds itself reeling, unable to expand outside its Eastern Cape base or pronounce coherent policy. Furthermore, it was the biggest loser in the September municipal floor-crossing, having lost 53 seats. Its share of the vote in the national poll declined to 2.3 percent from the 3.4 percent the party earned in 1999, and they hold just 9 seats in the National Assembly. Poloffs were unable to meet with the party's national chairman despite repeated attempts. Also curiously, the party's website has not been updated since August. Something appears to be going on within the UDM, although what is not quite clear. Whatever the case, Holomisa's previous ANC affiliation and the party's Eastern Cape base make it the prime candidate for a merger with the ruling party.

MONEY TROUBLES ACROSS THE BOARD

12. (C) One universal mentioned by every party representative is that they all have severe funding difficulties. The ACDP's Harbour said that while the party's representation in Parliament entitled it to approximately R2 million (\$330,000) a year in state funding (he said the ANC gets approximately R30 million), he reckoned that a party needs upwards of R10 million a year to operate and grow beyond a marginal status. Everyone noted the difficulty in raising money from private contributions-as Harbour put it, most private citizens regard politics as "dirty business" and do not want to contribute. Contributions from overseas were almost non-existent, even from South Africans abroad. Even more difficult was raising funds from the business community. As the ANC controls every provincial government along with the national government, there is no incentive for private business to donate to small parties. Several contacts said they knew of business leaders who are privately supportive of their parties, but that they were all scared that they would lose government contracts if they were known to contribute to anyone but the ANC.

OUTLOOK: NO IMPETUS FOR CONSOLIDATION AT THE MOMENT

13. (C) Overall, South Africa's micro-opposition is struggling both in terms of finances and members, but the parties will likely survive as long as the political will is there. ANC dominance, especially after the merger of the New National Party, means that it does not need to spend its money and influence to induce any new coalition partners. Furthermore, while running on a shoestring, most contacts said their parties are careful about not spending more money

than they have. Looking at the parties individually, the ACDP and Freedom Front appear too ideologically driven to fold, while the ID's encouraging early results and enthusiasm will likely keep it running in the medium term. The Minority Front, a Durban-based party with a large Indian constituency and two MPs, has a lock on a niche constituency and no apparent reason to give it up. PAC and AZAPO are already, in essence, ANC partners, and PAC in particular would have to sort out its internal mess before the ANC would consider gobbling it up. The UCDP is an ego vehicle for Mangope, and while his death could set off a push to join the ANC, Ditshetelo definitely seems to have his eyes on the reins. This leaves the UDM, which strikes Poloff as the most vulnerable to being subsumed by the ruling party. Such a deal, however, would likely be contingent on a Cabinet slot for Holomisa, and it does not appear that the ANC, already dominant in Eastern Cape, needs the UDM enough to submit to such a demand.

FRAZER